

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. The changes are shown by strikethrough (for deleted matter) and underlining (for adding matter).

1. (Amended) A process for handling and stacking a plurality of thermoformed ~~containers or lids~~ objects, which comprises the following ~~sequence of phases~~ steps:

A2 - obtaining ~~during a thermoforming phase~~ mouldings of lids and containers, having ~~thermoformed objects each formed with at least three stacking protrusions or~~ spacers, all having ~~the same~~ the same space arrangement in ~~all the~~ each thermoformed object ~~products of the same moulding~~, at least one of ~~the~~ the stacking protrusions or spacers of ~~a same thermoformed object being set out located~~ located in a non specular symmetric way with respect to at least a centre line of the respective thermoformed object ~~container or lid~~ and at a distance from the same centre line of ~~the respective container or lid~~ different from that of the others protrusions or spacers)

- arranging one ~~or a~~ moulding of said thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ in at least one support template ~~(to keep them in order according to the spatial space arrangement) that they had during the thermoforming phase~~,

- ~~turning through a predetermined angle~~ rotating every other thermoformed object ~~or moulding of objects either containers or lids~~ by a predetermined angle before or during ~~their~~ ^{their} transfer to a stacking station, and

- stacking the thermoformed objects ~~mouldings of thermoformed containers or lids~~ with alternate thermoformed objects ~~mouldings turned through~~ rotated by said predetermined angle, ~~so as~~ to obtain stacks of thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~, where the stacking protrusions of a thermoformed object ~~container or lid~~ are offset with respect to those of the next thermoformed object ~~container or lid~~ in each stack.

2. (Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~said rotation phase the step of turning the thermoformed objects~~ includes

picking up a ~~moulding of~~ thermoformed objects from a supporting template,

turning the ~~said moulding~~ thermoformed objects about a vertical axis ~~or the single containers or lids of said moulding~~, while the ~~said~~ thermoformed objects are lifted, and

placing the ~~said~~ thermoformed objects rotated through the ~~said~~ predetermined angle on the same template or on another template loaded with thermoformed objects that have not been turned.

A2
3. (Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~said thermoformed objects containers or lids~~ are rotated through an angle of 180°.

4. (Amended) A plant for handling and stacking thermoformed ~~objects containers or lids~~ having at least three projections (8a, 8b) acting as stacking spacers, at least one of which is arranged at non specular symmetry with respect to at least a centre line (m-m) of the respective ~~thermoformed object container or lid~~ (2), said plant (1) including, ~~in sequence~~, a receiving station (3) for a ~~thermoformed object container or lid or a moulding of containers or lids~~ (2), at least a ~~stacking or working handling~~ station (6) for said ~~thermoformed objects containers or lid~~ (2), a stacking station (4) for said ~~thermoformed objects containers or lids~~ (2), means (5, 50) of transferring the ~~thermoformed objects containers or lids~~ (2) from the receiving station (3) to the stacking station (4) through each ~~working or handling~~ station (6), wherein and is characterized in that at least one of the ~~said~~ handling stations (6) includes handling means (17) arranged to rotate ~~through by~~ a predetermined angle about a vertical axis ~~every other moulding of all thermoformed objects containers or lids~~ (2) before or during their transfer to said stacking station (4), thereby obtaining stacks (7) of ~~thermoformed objects lids or containers~~ (2), where the stacking spacers (8a, 8b) of a one thermoformed object container or lid (2) are angularly offset with respect to those of the next thermoformed object container or lid.

5. (Amended) A plant according to claim 4, wherein said handling means ~~are~~ comprises a support structure (15, 16) and a head ~~or~~ unit (17) for picking up samples of a ~~moulding of thermoformed objects products~~ (2), which ~~is~~ are rotatably supported

rotatably and can be ~~lift~~ lifted and lowered on said support structure (15, 16).

6. (Amended) A plant according to claim 5, wherein said ~~picking up unit head unit~~ (17) comprises a support member (19) rotatably mounted around a vertical axis on said support structure (15, 16), a multiplicity of spacers (20) carried by said support member (19) and extending downwards, and a holding means (21) carried by each said spacer (20) and spaced apart with respect to the remaining holding means (21) according to the configuration of ~~a moulding of the~~ thermoformed objects products (2) transported by said transfer means (5, 50).

A 2

7. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, wherein said holding means (21) includes suckers.

8. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, including a geared motor unit (18) for controlled rotation of said support member (19).

9. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, wherein said support structure includes a fixed support (16), an overhanging arm (15) having one end thereof slidably mounted along at least ~~a~~ one vertical guide (16a) on said fixed support (16), and drive means (16b, 16c) to cause said overhanging arm controllably to lift and lower.

Claims 10-15 are withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner as belonging to non-elected species.